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REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT ON ITS TWENTY-FIRST MEETING*

(Washington, D.C., 5-7 May 1993)

SUMMARY

The Subcommittee agreed to retain on the agenda for its future meetings items dealing with the work accomplished by agencies in the preceding year and their future activities during the following biennium. The current outlines for both those reports would be maintained but increased emphasis would be given to encouraging agencies to provide factual information and analysis of significant substantive shifts in their rural development and poverty alleviation policies and programmes, major innovative projects and recent publications (paras. 20 and 59).

The Subcommittee also agreed that specific thematic topics would be selected for discussion at future meetings. The thematic topic selected for discussion at the twenty-second meeting would be "Policy approaches to rural poverty alleviation" (paras. 18 and 64).

There was a widely shared view that the Subcommittee should go beyond information-sharing to advocacy. That would presuppose an attempt to develop, to the extent possible, common and mutually supportive approaches and perspectives (para. 19).

After reviewing the report of the joint meeting of the Panels on Monitoring and Evaluation and on People's Participation (May 1992), the Subcommittee on Rural Development endorsed the Panels' proposal that there were specific issues in both monitoring and evaluation and people's participation which could be best addressed by separate panel meetings, while participatory evaluation could benefit from joint meetings. The Subcommittee endorsed the proposal of the Monitoring and Evaluation Panel to take up the issue of lessons learned/feedback at its next meeting (paras. 28 and 60).

There was general consensus that the mandate of the Panel on People's Participation should be expanded to take account of changes that had taken place in development approaches since the Panel was established in 1981. The International Labour Office (ILO), which had convened the Panel for the last 12 years, felt it was an appropriate moment for a change in the leadership of the Panel and suggested that the World Bank consider taking over the role of

* The name of the ACC Task Force on Rural Development has been changed to the Subcommittee on Rural Development as of April 1993 (see ACC/1993/2/Add.2, para. 5).

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convenor. The World Bank representative agreed to consider that request in consultation with the concerned department of the Bank and to inform the Chairman of the Subcommittee of the Bank's decision. It was also agreed that if the Bank were unable to assume the function of the convenor of the Panel, the Chairman of the Subcommittee would consult with other agencies with a view to reaching an agreement on a convenor (para. 31).

The Working Group on Industrial Contribution to Rural Development would distribute the final version of its paper on poverty alleviation through the development of rural small industries to all Subcommittee members and would revise the discussion paper on intersectoral linkages and their impact on rural poverty alleviation for submission to the next meeting (paras. 33, 34 and 61).

The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assured the Subcommittee on Rural Development that he would explore ways and means of making the Working Group on the Impact of National Macroeconomic Policies on the Rural Poor, for which UNDP was the convenor, more effective in the future (paras. 41 and 62).

Member agencies expressed satisfaction that the Subcommittee continued to give serious attention to the development issues and problems facing rural women in the context of follow-up to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies (para. 44).

It was also agreed that the topic entitled "Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies towards the Year 2000 for Rural Women" would not be discussed before the 1996 meeting, since the Commission for the Status of Women was undertaking a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies that would be examined by the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing, in September 1995 (para. 52).

The Subcommittee discussed the paper prepared by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) entitled "An enabling approach to shelter improvement in rural areas as a contribution to sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation". The Subcommittee agreed to revert to the topic at its meeting in 1995 (para. 48).

The Subcommittee agreed to discuss the topic "Environment and rural development" as a substantive item at its meeting in 1995. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank would take the lead in developing an outline for a paper on the subject, which would be presented at the 1994 Subcommittee meeting in order to solicit suggestions regarding coverage and content so that the paper itself might be presented in 1995. That activity could contribute to the work of the newly established Inter-agency Committee for Sustainable Development (IACSD) (para. 66).

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) requested the members of the Subcommittee to consider ways and means of developing collaborative activities in support of returning refugees. Member agencies expressed general readiness to cooperate with UNHCR in that endeavour. Mechanisms proposed for collaboration included: (a) inter-agency missions; (b) information exchange with a view to identifying ways and means

of promoting inter-agency collaboration at the country level; (c) strengthening of coordination and cooperation between UNHCR and other agencies which were already implementing projects in refugee/returnee areas; (d) identification of new models of intervention for reintegration assistance and quick-acting development; and (e) inclusion of areas of return in national plans of development/reconstruction (para. 57).

The Subcommittee on Rural Development agreed on its programme of work and time-frame for 1993-1994 (paras. 58 to 66).

The Subcommittee considered the implications for its future role and functioning of the decisions of ACC at its meeting in April 1993 concerning the role of the inter-agency coordinating mechanisms in ACC's broader decisions. The Subcommittee noted, in particular, that ACC had asked CCPOQ (the Subcommittee's parent body) and the Subcommittee to consider whether the Subcommittee should retain its present focus on rural poverty or should expand it to cover problems of urban poverty. Responding to that request, the Subcommittee recalled the conclusions reached on the subject at its twentieth session. It agreed that its main focus should be on sustainable rural development. It was agreed that the issue of rural development should be considered in the broader sense and should also cover related subjects, such as macroeconomic policies, intersectoral as well as rural/urban linkages and interconnections between rural poverty and environment, to the extent that they affect rural development and contribute to poverty alleviation (paras. 67 and 68).

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I. MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMME AND OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS

1. The Subcommittee considered the implications for its future role and functioning of the recent decisions of ACC concerning its inter-agency coordinating mechanisms (see paras. 10, 11 and 67-71).

2. The Subcommittee noted that ACC had asked the newly established Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and the Subcommittee on Rural Development to give further consideration to the question of whether the Subcommittee should retain its present focus on rural poverty or expand it to cover problems of urban poverty as well. In that connection, the Subcommittee recalled that the issue had been discussed at some length at its twentieth session the previous year and that it had arrived at the conclusion that the mandate of the Task Force should remain firmly anchored in rural development but could perhaps be enlarged so that the Task Force would also be in a position to review linkages between rural and urban poverty.

3. The Subcommittee agreed that its main focus should be on sustainable rural development. It was agreed that the issue of rural development should be considered in the broader sense and should also cover related subjects, such as macroeconomic policies, intersectoral as well as rural-urban linkages and interconnections between rural poverty and environment, to the extent that they affected rural development and contributed to poverty alleviation.

4. The Subcommittee agreed to adopt a flexible approach, selecting themes of priority and common interest at each meeting with the objective of examining the different approaches and experiences of the agencies, including problems they encountered, as well as trying to reach a common understanding and approach among the agencies.

5. It was agreed to discuss the themes "Policy approaches to rural poverty alleviation" and "Environment and rural development" at Subcommittee meetings in 1994 and 1995 respectively. It was also felt that Subcommittee work methods could be usefully reviewed at a future meeting in order to better respond to specific requests.

II. OPENING STATEMENTS

6. The twenty-first meeting of the Subcommittee on Rural Development was hosted by the World Bank in Washington, D.C. The meeting took place from 5 to 7 May 1993 and was attended by 24 representatives of 19 organizations and agencies. The list of participants is given in the annex.

7. Opening addresses were made by Mr. Michel Petit, Director of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department of the World Bank, and Mr. B. P. Dutia, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Rural Development.

8. In his address, Mr. Petit welcomed the members of the Subcommittee on Rural Development on behalf of the World Bank. He informed the Subcommittee of a new agricultural strategy paper which had recently been endorsed by the World Bank

Board. The paper had been prepared by his department in response to concern that the share of lending to agriculture had declined in recent years and that evaluation reports had revealed disappointing performance of many projects, particularly in the agriculture sector. The new strategy had put agriculture back on the World Bank development agenda as the key sector in poverty alleviation. During the preparatory process, which had involved consultations with and inputs from Bank staff from different departments, a consensus had emerged on the following key areas for Bank action in the agriculture sector: (a) the need to retain the momentum for policy and institutional reform; (b) the importance of striking an appropriate balance between the role of the Government and market forces; (c) mechanisms for encouraging participatory development; (d) promotion of environmentally sustainable management of natural resources; and (e) continued emphasis on technological development. Those new directions implied a policy shift towards greater emphasis on rural poverty alleviation, beneficiary participation and improved policy and project design.

9. Mr. Dutia stressed that the meeting of the Subcommittee was taking place at a time when the issue of poverty reduction was being given a prominent place on the development agenda. At the same time, perceptions on development strategy and approach were changing and greater emphasis was being placed on issues of decentralization; on enhancing the role of market forces in resource mobilization and allocation; and on active participation by people at the grass-roots level in the development process itself. Moreover, the linkages between poverty, sustainability and environmental issues were also being given considerable attention in the context of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Eradication of poverty was seen not only as an objective in its own right but also as a necessary prerequisite for achieving sustained growth.

10. Mr. Dutia also mentioned that the role of the former Task Force on Rural Development had been under consideration during the last few months as part of the discussions on all coordinating mechanisms within the United Nations system. CCPOQ, together with the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) which had reviewed the Task Force on Rural Development and had recognized that it had served as a useful mechanism for system-wide coordination in the area of rural development, with a special focus on rural poverty alleviation, and they had indicated that the Task Force should be retained. After considering the recommendations of those committees, ACC had concluded that the Task Force should report to CCPOQ, which would combine the functions of the former Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Services) and the relevant functions of the former Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Programme Matters). Furthermore, it was understood that, while serving as a subsidiary body of CCPOQ, the Task Force would also provide inputs to IACSD on issues related to Agenda 21. ACC had also agreed that CCPOQ and the Task Force itself would give further consideration to whether the Task Force should retain its present focus on rural poverty or expand it to include urban poverty as well.

11. At the request of ACC, the Organizational Committee had subsequently reviewed the standard nomenclature for ACC subsidiary bodies and had decided to designate as "subcommittees" all bodies reporting to CCPOQ, the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions and IACSD. Accordingly, the Task Force

would from then on be known as the Subcommittee on Rural Development, reporting to CCPOQ.

12. The Subcommittee subsequently discussed the implications of those changes for its work under agenda item 13 (see sect. I above and paras. 67-70 below).

III. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

13. The agenda items and summaries of discussions at the twenty-first meeting of the Subcommittee on Rural Development are given below.

Item 3. Work accomplished during 1992

14. The Subcommittee on Rural Development examined the report by agencies on work accomplished during 1992, which comprised individual reports by member agencies and organizations and an introductory overview prepared by the secretariat of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Reports were received from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Labour Office (ILO), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the former Department of Economic and Social Development of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the World Bank, the World Food Council (WFC) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) submitted its report at the meeting.

15. UNESCO wished to put on record its appreciation of the FAO secretariat's balanced treatment in the overview of the information provided in the agencies' reports.

16. Several members provided additional information on their programmes in the course of the discussions. The International Trade Centre, for example, reported on its support for the development of village enterprises involved in export production. The ILO referred to a three-country review of rural employment/poverty reduction interventions, the main findings of which were: (a) while rural poverty was more serious, Governments tended to give greater emphasis to urban poverty reduction due to the stronger lobby of urban inhabitants, (b) even Governments committed to addressing rural poverty often faced insurmountable resource constraints and (c) approaches based on targeting and direct intervention were not particularly effective in the absence of a conducive policy environment.

17. The members of the Subcommittee discussed in considerable detail the purpose and value of the current reporting system under that agenda item. A

number of members felt that the reports submitted were largely descriptive and provided little stimulating analysis. On the other hand, it was recognized that they provided a useful mechanism for information exchange on the agencies' activities in rural development and poverty alleviation.

18. At the same time it was generally felt that it was both necessary and feasible to exploit the potential synergy of Subcommittee members in order to address rural poverty and rural development issues in a coordinated manner. It was agreed that that could be more effectively achieved by considering selected themes of priority and common interest at each meeting, with the objective of examining the different approaches and experiences of the agencies, including the problems they encountered, and trying to reach a common understanding and approach among the agencies. The Subcommittee agreed to consider that issue further at its meeting in 1994 (see para. 70).

19. There was a widely shared view that the Subcommittee should go beyond information-sharing to advocacy. That would presuppose an attempt to develop, to the extent possible, common and mutually supportive approaches and perspectives. While it was recognized that the Subcommittee could not take decisions which impinged on the policy direction of individual member agencies, it could none the less set its own agenda for analysing emerging issues and playing an advocacy role within the agencies themselves and the wider United Nations system.

20. In conclusion, it was agreed to retain the report on work accomplished in the preceding year as a regular agenda item. The outline, which had been revised at the request of the nineteenth meeting in 1991, would be retained, but increased emphasis would be given by agencies to highlighting and explaining significant substantive shifts in their rural development and poverty alleviation policies and programmes, as well as major innovative projects and recent publications. The Subcommittee requested agencies to provide information on issues not covered by the outline if necessary.

Item 4. Monitoring and evaluation and people's participation

21. The representative of IFAD, convenor of the Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation, and the representative of the ILO, convenor of the Panel on People's Participation, presented the report of the joint session of the two Panels, which took place at the World Bank Headquarters on 3 May 1993. The meeting was attended by 19 participants representing 12 agencies and organizations and one observer.

22. The Subcommittee was informed that, at the invitation of IFAD, Mr. Joe Collins had prepared a paper on behalf of the ILO entitled "Communal work and rural development in the state of Oaxaca in Mexico". The paper evaluated a programme involving community participation in building low-technology, labour-intensive water projects for household consumption and small-scale irrigation. The programme had benefited greatly from the social cohesion in the villages and the tradition of community decision-making and unpaid community work, "tequio", from each household. Programme officials from the outset had sought to be quickly responsive to the communities' applications and had therefore operated with a notably more streamlined and less bureaucratic fashion than other government agencies. Before long, however, those other

agencies had attacked the special programme with the result that the programme had slowed considerably in its execution of projects.

23. In discussing Mr. Collins' presentation, some participants wondered if the programme's apparently successful method of working with the village communities on the water projects had positively influenced other government institutions. Mr. Collins said he doubted that the government institutions had changed but stated that the communities appeared to have learned from the experience and would continue to organize to effectively trigger changes in the behaviour of the government institutions towards them.

24. Mr. R. Picciotto, Vice-President and Director-General, Operations Evaluation Department of the World Bank, addressed the meeting on the subject of participatory development and evaluation. He stated that the nature of evaluation had changed in accord with the fundamental changes that the concept of development economics and the development agenda had undergone. He suggested that the emphasis was now being placed on knowledge and institutions, which made evaluation more difficult.

25. Mr. Picciotto pointed out that the focus on participatory development had created an increased demand for evaluations. It had also broadened and diversified the scope of evaluations and brought in new benchmarks, including institutional and environmental indicators. He suggested that evaluation should become more participatory but warned that in involving non-governmental organizations and their information networks in the evaluation process, development agencies should be careful not to fall into the trap of serving single-issue minority groups. The report on Mr. Picciotto's elaborations would be made available to the members of the Subcommittee shortly.

26. The Subcommittee was informed that the Panels had reviewed the changes that had taken place in their work programmes over the last 12 years in response to the evolving needs of agencies and also in response to their own achievements. With regard to the future, the Subcommittee endorsed the Panels' proposal that there were specific issues in both monitoring and evaluation and people's participation that could be best addressed by separate Panel meetings, while participatory evaluation could benefit from joint meetings. It was pointed out that participatory evaluation was still largely undeveloped among the agencies and it was agreed that when particularly relevant experiences in participatory evaluation were brought to the attention of the convenors, a joint meeting could usefully be held.

27. The Subcommittee endorsed the proposal of the Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation to address the following in future meetings:

(a) Mechanisms for presentation, dissemination and use of lessons learned, and data banks of lessons learned and their access to users within the agency as well as to other member agencies;

(b) National capacity-building in monitoring and evaluating, including funding, training, and joint endeavours of Subcommittee member agencies.

28. It was agreed that the Panel would consider lessons learned/feedback as referred to in paragraph 27 (a) above at its next meeting. The Subcommittee

welcomed the IFAD offer to prepare a draft questionnaire on that topic for circulation to member agencies for their comments before finalizing and dispatch to the agencies. IFAD would then prepare a paper analysing the responses to the questionnaire and would circulate the paper to member agencies for discussion at the next Panel meeting.

29. The Subcommittee also discussed at some length ILO proposals for expanding the work of the Panel on People's Participation. There was general consensus that significant changes had taken place in development strategy and approach inside and outside the United Nations system since 1981, when the Panel had been established, and that that made it necessary to reconsider the role and orientation of the Panel. At its inception, the major issue had been how to involve grass-roots populations in the design and implementation of projects. Thus the question of organizing the poor and the role of the animator were important for ensuring people's participation. Since then important changes had taken place: the emphasis had shifted away from State-sponsored development, pointing to the need for greater involvement of civil society in policy-making; democratization had established itself as a key objective in development strategies; structural adjustment programmes that required consensus-building had been introduced, making it necessary to involve different population groups (those who gained as a result of adjustment and those who lost) in a social dialogue; finally, the United Nations system had moved from a project to a programme approach, which had made it necessary to take into account macro-objectives.

30. The Subcommittee also discussed the ILO proposal to change the name of the Panel to "Panel on Participatory Development" in order to reflect those new orientations. FAO, however, pointed out that the concept of people's participation as enunciated by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development was broad enough to address the above-mentioned issues in the context of rural development, so that there was no need to change the name of the Panel.

31. The ILO, which had convened the Panel for the last 12 years, felt that it was an appropriate moment for a change in the leadership of the Panel and requested that the World Bank consider taking over the role of convenor. The World Bank representative agreed that the Bank would consider the request and would inform the Chairman of the Subcommittee of the Bank's decision. It was also agreed that if the Bank were unable to assume the function of convenor the Chairman of the Subcommittee would consult with other agencies to select a convenor of the Panel.

Item 5. Industrial contribution to rural development

32. The UNIDO representative reported on the main issues discussed at the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Industrial Contribution to Rural Development. Convened at World Bank headquarters on 4 May 1993, the meeting was attended by 17 participants representing 10 agencies.

33. The Subcommittee on Rural Development was informed that the discussion paper entitled "Poverty Alleviation through the Development of Rural Small Industries: Issues and Considerations", prepared by Mr. Ian Livingstone and presented at the third meeting of the Working Group, had been edited and the

final version of the document would be distributed to Subcommittee members by the end of May 1993. The UNIDO representative thanked all Working Group members for their cooperation, particularly thanking FAO, the ILO and Habitat for their financial contributions and those agencies, IFAD and UNHCR for sharing their experiences.

34. The Subcommittee was also informed of the discussion by the Working Group of a paper prepared by Mr. Erik Thorbecke entitled "Intersectoral linkages and their impact on rural poverty alleviation: a social accounting matrix approach". The report provided a basis for discussions of rural-urban linkages and for stimulating inter-agency cooperation in the field. The Working Group, while it considered the paper useful, made a number of suggestions for its further elaboration and suggested that UNIDO revise the paper taking those comments into account and submit a final version to the Group at its next meeting for further consideration. The Subcommittee was also informed that UNDP was preparing a report on rural-urban linkages which would be issued in June 1993. UNDP would send copies to Subcommittee members.

35. The Subcommittee reviewed the report of the Working Group and learned that it had proposed a number of issues for discussion at future meetings. It took note of the Group's conclusion that, after Group members had sufficiently reviewed issues raised in the report, the convenor should hold informal consultations with them on their proposals for the future programme of work. On the basis of those consultations, the convenor would prepare a final report of the meeting, including a work plan, for submission to the secretariat of the Subcommittee.

Item 6. Coordination and collaboration on rural development and agrarian reform activities and programmes: future activities during the 1993-1994 biennium

36. A report containing submissions from 21 agencies and an overview prepared by FAO was presented for discussion. Submissions were received from ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, IFAD, ILO, INSTRAW, the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT, ITU, Habitat, the former Department of Economic and Social Development of the United Nations Secretariat, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNRISD, the World Bank, WFC and WHO.

37. The members of the Subcommittee on Rural Development reviewed the summary of activities listed in the overview and the individual submissions, noting that the rural development strategies reported by the agencies reflected an increased emphasis on poverty alleviation and a renewed focus on the African region. An area of universal concern continued to be the protection of the environment. Agenda 21 provided the overall framework on the basis of which all agencies could integrate environmental concerns in a comprehensive manner into future rural development activities. Members reported that their work would involve taking specific actions aimed at exploiting natural resources in a sustainable manner and making environmental protection features integral components of projects and programmes.

38. Other areas of emphasis included incorporating nutrition concerns into food production planning; providing support to education, training and agricultural

extension; and promoting self-help participatory approaches to rural development.

39. Members of the Subcommittee would promote activities which facilitated the access of rural people to land and other natural resources as well as to credit, marketing and agricultural services. The integration of women in development and the promotion of on-farm and off-farm income-generating activities would continue to be important features of the interventions of many agencies.

40. The Subcommittee made recommendations for the preparation of the next report on future activities of United Nations agencies. While the overall format was found useful as a means of sharing information, it was felt that it led to a rather descriptive presentation of planned activities. Agencies were asked to be more selective when preparing their contributions to the next report, to concentrate on important issues and to provide analytical explanations for their proposed activities.

Item 7. Impact of national macroeconomic policies on the rural poor

41. The representative of UNDP assured the Subcommittee on Rural Development that he would explore ways and means of making the Working Group on the Impact of National Macroeconomic Policies on the Rural Poor, for which UNDP was the convenor, more effective in the future. He reported on recent work undertaken by the UNDP Africa Bureau in that area, including an assessment of the Social Dimensions of Adjustment programme which was designed to mitigate the social costs of structural adjustment by providing food aid and critical farm inputs in emergency situations; targeted assistance to vulnerable socio-economic groups; mobilization of grass-roots and community organizations to participate in the provision of social services; programme and budgetary support for local government agencies responsible for improving the productive capacity of and access to productive assets by the rural poor, including land redistribution and upgrading of rural infrastructure. The main conclusions were that, due to urban bias, the rural poor had not been adequately targeted in recovery programmes, rural poverty had in many cases increased and a conducive policy environment was essential to ensure the success of those programmes. The UNDP representative suggested that it might be useful to collect and analyse more experiences on such social action programmes with a view to discussing the lessons learned at a future meeting of the Subcommittee.

42. In response to the UNDP presentation, several other related issues were proposed for future consideration by the Subcommittee. One suggestion was to examine the linkages between rural poverty and environmental degradation, within a broad rural development perspective. The question of the impact of liberalization programmes on the rural poor also provoked considerable debate. It was recognized that a shift in the terms of trade in favour of agriculture could have short-term negative impacts on the rural poor, who were net food buyers, and that coherent policy packages were needed to address such short-term effects on the poor. In that context, it was felt that there was a need for increased advocacy for promoting the participation of the rural poor in development planning and incorporating poverty concerns in the policy dialogue. There was general interest in further exploring those two topics in future Subcommittee meetings.

Item 8. Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies towards the Year 2000 for rural women

43. The report, containing submissions from 21 agencies and an overview prepared by FAO, was presented to the Sub-Committee. Submissions were received from ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, IFAD, ILO, INSTRAW, ITC UNCTAD/GATT, ITU, UNCHS (Habitat), UNDESD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNRISD, World Bank, WHO.

44. Member agencies expressed their satisfaction that the Subcommittee had continued to give serious attention to the development issues and problems facing rural women. It was recognized that no progress could be achieved in rural development programmes without the direct involvement of rural women.

Item 9. An enabling approach to shelter improvement in rural areas as a contribution to sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation

45. The representative of UNCHS introduced a paper on the above-named topic, which was a revised version of a similar report presented to the Subcommittee at its twentieth meeting. The new version, which had been prepared in response to comments from the Subcommittee, provided updated, detailed information on financial mechanisms for shelter delivery and elaborated on three main types of mechanisms for mobilizing shelter finance within rural areas: mutual self-help groups, thrift and credit societies and community credit agencies.

46. The meeting recognized that shelter improvement initiatives that employed labour-intensive technologies and used local construction materials could play an important role in alleviating poverty in two ways, i.e., through improved living conditions for those benefiting from shelter improvements and through employment generation in the materials supply and construction sectors.

47. The representative of UNIDO expressed the interest of his organization in establishing working relationships with Habitat in the field of building design and building materials, while the representative of INSTRAW reported on an ongoing housing project in the Dominican Republic, a joint effort of INSTRAW, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Food Programme.

48. According to its representative, Habitat did not expect to complete in the near future any study on the topic of shelter improvement and poverty alleviation. It was therefore decided that that item would not be included on the agenda for the Subcommittee Meeting in 1994 but would be discussed again in 1995.

Item 10. Women and the environment

49. The representative of UNEP presented a paper on the above-mentioned topic, which provided the Subcommittee with an update on the external evaluation of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the follow-up to the 1991 Global Assembly on Women and the Environment held in Miami. The meeting was informed about two major publications which were currently being finalized, "Women as Environmental Managers: Assessing Success. Lessons Learned and Methodologies Discovered" and "The Global Greenbook: A Manual to Support Organizing a National Assembly on Women and Environment".

50. The International Consultation on Advancing Women in Ecosystem Management, to be held in October 1993, would aim to promote cooperation, coordination and strategic planning among multinational, regional and bilateral agencies in support of the implementation of chapter 24 of Agenda 21 and the preparations for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women.

51. In the following discussion reference was made to the ongoing collaboration between UNDP, FAO and the World Bank regarding training in the area of women and the environment. Several other agencies, such as UNESCO, INSTRAW, UNHCR and UNIDO, expressed their interest in cooperating with other members of the Subcommittee in the field.

52. The meeting agreed that the topic "Women and the environment" should be considered by the Subcommittee at its future meetings within the broader context of "Environment and rural development", including the role of women as environmental managers. There was also general agreement that the topic "Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies towards the Year 2000 for rural women" should not be discussed before the 1996 meeting, since the Commission for the Status of Women was undertaking a review and appraisal of the implementation of the strategies that would be examined by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Subcommittee further noted that the theme for the 1993 World Environment Day would be "Poverty and the environment".

Item 11. Refugee/returnee aid and development

53. The paper on refugee/returnee aid and development was presented by the representative of UNHCR. She stressed that UNHCR played an advocacy and catalytic role to urge development agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions as well as bilateral donors and regional banks to integrate refugee and returnee aid within the wider context of their rural development programmes. She informed the Subcommittee that progress was being made in addressing the problems of refugee aid and development, a topic that had been discussed by ACC in April 1993 in preparation for its discussion by the Economic and Social Council High-Level Segment in June-July 1993. UNHCR therefore felt that the Subcommittee could make a valuable contribution to addressing the problems of returnee aid and development.

54. The UNHCR representative stressed the need to overcome some of the shortcomings in the present response to returnee relief and development, which were outlined in some detail in the report, by giving urgent attention to the need for (a) increased and sustained inter-agency cooperation; (b) new models of intervention for reintegration assistance and quick-acting development; and (c) inclusion of areas of return in national development/reconstruction plans.

55. The representative of UNHCR requested that that item remain on the agenda of the Subcommittee for its 1994 meeting. She expressed the hope that the discussion at that Subcommittee meeting would lead to inter-agency collaborative activities, the results of which could be reported on at the next meeting. Countries where developmental action in returnee areas was urgently needed included Mozambique, Afghanistan and countries in the Horn of Africa.

56. In response to the UNHCR initiative, UNIDO reported on its ongoing operations in Mozambique, aimed at creating employment in rural areas and

informal sector activities for women in Maputo, and suggested that modalities for cooperation and coordination between the two agencies could be developed in that area. The Habitat representative mentioned that his agency provided emergency planning assistance in situations involving natural disasters and/or refugees and would be glad to (a) contribute in providing emergency housing, water and sanitation facilities; (b) exchange information with UNHCR in those areas; (c) explore the possibility of participating in inter-agency programming missions. The United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) drew attention to the fact that refugees could be vulnerable as potential consumers and producers of drugs and expressed the interest of UNDCP in collaborating with UNHCR on those issues. Both UNICEF and UNESCO mentioned that they were implementing programmes that integrated development and emergency needs and they proposed that UNHCR could usefully develop and report to the Subcommittee on possible mechanisms for information exchange.

57. In conclusion, member agencies expressed a general readiness to cooperate with UNHCR in that area. The following specific mechanisms were proposed for collaboration: (a) establishing inter-agency missions; (b) providing information exchange on UNHCR assessment of and proposals for meeting the requirements for returnee aid and development assistance, with a view to identifying ways and means of promoting inter-agency collaboration at the field level; (c) strengthening coordination and cooperation between UNHCR and other agencies which were already implementing projects in refugee/returnee areas; (d) identifying new models of intervention for reintegration assistance and quick-acting development; and (e) including areas of return in national plans for development/reconstruction.

Item 12. Programme of work and time-frame for 1993-1994

58. The Subcommittee on Rural Development reviewed and adopted the following programme of work and time-frame for 1993-1994.

59. It decided that the agencies would submit to the secretariat, for consolidation and submission at the next meeting, reports on:

(a) Work accomplished during 1993;

(b) Activities envisaged for the 1994-1995 biennium, giving emphasis to recent important changes affecting, inter alia, the roles of the State, civil society and market forces in alleviating rural poverty.

60. The Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation would undertake to:

(a) Prepare a draft questionnaire for circulation to member agencies on the topic of mechanisms for presentation, dissemination and use of lessons learned in monitoring and evaluation, data banks of those lessons learned and their access to users;

(b) Analyse the responses to that questionnaire in a paper;

(c) Circulate that analytical paper to member agencies for discussion at the next Panel meeting.

61. The 1993-1994 work programme for the Working Group on Industrial Contribution to Rural Development would include further reviewing urban and rural linkages in order to illustrate the impact on the poor of various interventions. It would finalize its paper on poverty alleviation through the development of rural small industries and revise the discussion paper on intersectoral linkages and their impact on rural poverty alleviation. The convenor would consult its members regarding their proposals for the future programme of work.

62. UNDP would explore ways and means of making the Working Group on the Impact of National Macroeconomic Policies on the Rural Poor more effective in the future.

63. UNHCR, in consultation with the secretariat of the Subcommittee and with the help of inputs from members of the Subcommittee, would prepare another report on refugee/returnee aid and development and submit it to the next meeting of the Subcommittee.

64. The Subcommittee agreed that the theme "Policy approaches to rural poverty alleviation" should be included in the agenda of its next meeting. It was felt that the consideration of that subject at the next session of the Subcommittee would be timely in view of the forthcoming World Summit on Social Development to be held in Copenhagen in 1995, for which the alleviation of poverty was a core there. It agreed that the ILO would have overall responsibility for the preparation of the study and that funding for the preparation of the document should be shared by the ILO, FAO and UNDP, with the World Bank providing staff input for the analysis and presentation of its own experience. Any other agency that wished to contribute to funding the preparation of the document was invited to do so.

65. It was agreed that the study should review the experiences of agencies and national Governments in different approaches to rural development and should include examples of both success cases and failure. The ILO would revise the draft outline and send it to FAO, UNDP and the World Bank as well as any other agency which might wish to contribute to the study. The ILO, in consultation with the members of that core group, would recruit a consultant, circulate the draft report for comments and prepare a final version for submission to the Subcommittee at its next meeting.

66. The Subcommittee agreed to discuss the question "Environment and rural development" as a substantive item at its meeting in 1995. It was agreed that UNEP and the World Bank would take the lead in developing an outline, which would be considered at the 1994 Subcommittee meeting for coverage and content, so that the completed paper could be presented in 1995. That activity could contribute to the work of the newly established IACSD.

Item 13. Other business

67. Under that item the Subcommittee was informed of the discussions on ACC coordinating mechanisms (see paras. 10 and 11). The ILO observed and the Subcommittee agreed that it was not clear how inter-agency coordination on the overall question of poverty alleviation would be handled under the new ACC structure. The Subcommittee noted that ACC had asked CCPOQ and the Subcommittee

should retain its present focus on rural poverty or expand it to include problems of urban poverty as well. In that connection, the Subcommittee recalled that the issue had been discussed at some length at its twentieth session the previous year and the conclusion had been reached that the mandate of the Task Force should remain firmly anchored in rural development but could perhaps be enlarged so that the Task Force would be in a position to review linkages between rural and urban poverty as well.

68. The Subcommittee agreed that its main focus should be on sustainable rural development. It was agreed that the issue of rural development should be considered in the broader sense and should also cover related matters, such as macroeconomic policies, intersectoral as well as rural-urban linkages and interconnections between rural poverty and environment, to the extent that those matters affected rural development and contributed to poverty alleviation.

69. The Subcommittee agreed that its work should promote inter-agency cooperation in rural development and poverty alleviation by: (a) exchanging information and experience; (b) developing common approaches to rural development; (c) strengthening complementary, informal contacts among Subcommittee members; and (d) preparing a basis for joint programming activities among agencies, where feasible.

70. The Subcommittee agreed to adopt a flexible approach, selecting themes of priority and common interest at each meeting with the objective of examining the different approaches and experiences of the agencies, including the problems they encountered, and trying to reach a common understanding and approach among the agencies. It was felt that Subcommittee methods of work could be usefully reviewed at a future meeting in order to enable it to respond more effectively to specific requests.

71. It was proposed to hold the next meeting of the Subcommittee on Rural Development in 1994 at UNESCO headquarters subject to approval by the Director-General of UNESCO.

Annex

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